

## 30th Anniversary of HIV/AIDS, CIRM teams making progress

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Thirty years ago the first reports of a mysterious illness began appearing in the media. This illness would eventually become known as AIDS.

CIRM board member Jeff Sheehy recently spoke as part of a KQED Forum radio show about the 30th anniversary of HIV/AIDS. As a long-time AIDS activist, Sheehy has been part of the fight for a cure. In his introduction, Sheehy talked about limitations of the current drug regimen for HIV/AIDS:

“We're still losing people and I think that gets lost in a lot of this. People have a treatment optimism belief. HIV or medication side effects are shortening lifespans. Things are still tough for people with HIV and one of the things we need to talk about is a cure." That cure is looking more hopeful with the announcement of a man who has come to be known as the Berlin patient (we blogged about him here). He received a bone marrow transplant in Berlin from someone who was effectively resistant to HIV infection. That man, Timothy Brown, also became resistant to infection and now doctors are unable to detect HIV in his body.

In the Forum discussion, Steven Deeks, professor of medicine at UCSF and a leader in HIV/AIDS research, pointed out that although Brown's HIV is now undetectable, his isn't the treatment that will become a widespread cure. First, there aren't enough bone marrow donors who are resistant to HIV. The bone marrow transplant itself is also an extremely risky procedure.

Deeks pointed to work being carried out by CIRM grantees who are attempting to engineer a person's own bone marrow stem cells to carry the mutation that makes the cells resistant to HIV. Sheehy pointed out that CIRM has been alone in funding this type of work:

“It's been lonely. Thank god for the voters in 2004 who voted for proposition 71[ the proposition that created CIRM]. What surprised me when I got appointed to this board I really didn't think there was much in HIV that could be done."

CIRM now funds more than \$40 million in HIV/AIDS research (see a list of those awards here), including two disease teams that are both working toward beginning clinical trials in two to three years.

This video features Sheehy and John Zaia from the City of Hope who leads one of those disease teams.

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Tags: sheehy, HIV/AIDS